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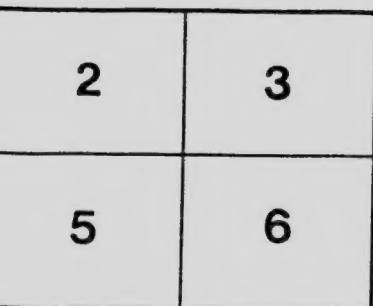
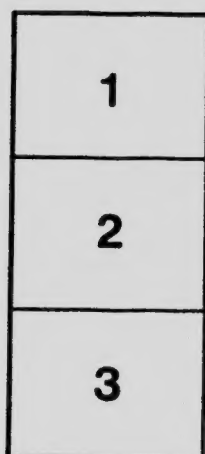
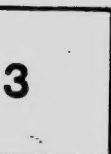
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The School Garden

Its Purpose--Its Care
During Vacation

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Hon. J. A. Murray, Minister

To Teachers and Pupils, School Trustees and Ratepayers in School Meeting Assembled.

The school garden represents in a large degree the attitude of the school toward outdoor instruction and community life problems. It is also the visible expression of the estimation of the people of the district of the value of education to increase productive industry. It stands for that side of education that dignifies manual labor under the direction of trained intelligence and a knowledge of scientific principles. It indicates that the people realize that there is a clear relationship between the instruction the schools afford and the improvement and development of local conditions, between what the children do at school and what they do for a better life for the social and economic prosperity of the community.

In a consideration of this question we cannot afford to eliminate the fact that the school is largely a local industry, that it should seek to make life in the district where it is situated more prosperous and enjoyable. The school is a means toward an end. It exists for the near at hand first; it stands for better citizenship here and now. The school costs money, most of which is supplied locally. It is reasonable therefore to expect that it should not only furnish the children with general instruction and training, but that it should deal with agencies that directly help to develop the community, that are a part of its life and vigor, that deal with the natural resources, through which the pursuits of the people are made possible, which they must engage in, in order to live there.

I make a direct appeal to the ratepayers of every district in annual school meeting assembled. While together look over your school property. Are the grounds neat, tidy and attractive? Are they exerting an influence for good on the young people attending the school? Do they indicate thrift? Do they show that the people recognize substantial value in their local educational institution? Is that institution inculcating in the children a love of the home land, a sympathy with its pursuits, a purpose to use the knowledge gained to improve and develop local conditions, to increase its prosperity?

The school property is the only possession in which every resident of the district has a part. If it be of value every resident therefore should have an interest in its upkeep. In concrete form its appearance and condition voice public opinion. The school premises should be the pride of the community, a place where residents will be sure to take visiting friends. Where this is the case, there will be no two opinions about school ground conditions, their influence in the neighborhood or the people's appreciation of the sort of education that makes the inhabitants prosperous, contented and happy.

The school ground therefore should be ample in size, it should be neatly

fenced, it should afford opportunity to the children for enjoyable recreation and exercise, it should include a cultivated area where physical and mental efforts combine for the development of the child for better local citizenship. We call this cultivated area a school garden. It is a means to an end; it is a link between the period of life preparation and the activities of mature citizenship, between the school and the home.

This school garden is a laboratory or workshop, a piece of apparatus for practical education, revealing the value of the school to the life of the district. It will be found an aid not only in interesting children in practical pursuits, but also in cultivating in them an appreciation for the beautiful in nature and the power and desire to express such taste by ornamenting their homes and their surroundings.

School grounds containing a well kept school garden will always be found more attractive, and, in all cases, other things being equal, such schools give better value to the community, a better education to the children who have greater interest in their work.

That during the summer vacation the school property should have a dilapidated, forsaken appearance is no credit to any community. It tends to make the young people lose interest in their surroundings. At a time when all nature is looking best, neglect and disorder at the spot that stands for local intelligence cannot but give a downward incline to thought and action among the younger portion of the population.

The idea is therefore, that the school grounds should be a point around which the thought and effort of all residents should centre, and that here during the school vacation, from time to time on Saturday afternoons, or other convenient time, for social enjoyment, for community improvement the people should assemble with the pupils of the school. On the principle that "Many hands make light work," a short time would suffice to put the garden and the entire school ground in good shape, mow the lawn, clean the walks and destroy weeds about the fence. The remainder of the time would be given to games and contests and social intercourse.

In many of our country sections to their great advantage Women's Institutes flourish. I feel sure their members in their districts would heartily co-operate in efforts of this character. Among the many parts the evening repast would be not the least entertaining. The ladies would gladly assume charge of such work. To assemble at four o'clock, spend the first hour and a half in labor, have the evening meal and spend remaining time until eight o'clock in games, might be the programme. Children, young people and heads of families all could participate with individual pleasure and profit.

Such a course of action would cause that the school garden need not be handed over to a paid caretaker, it would be a community investment for instruction and general improvement and pleasure. Public sentiment would be behind it. No one would be the poorer, in fact life in such a place would be worth more.

As the garden is a piece of apparatus for exemplifying instruction and giving training every pupil should be a participant. Every effort made should have its purpose, should afford instruction. If the work be a task exacted of pupils great difficulties will be encountered. If through child interest in life, in nature and doing, their interest is enlisted and the impelling power to act is from within each life, the effort is no longer a task, it is a pleasure. This is the real secret of success in school as in every phase of life. To accomplish the purpose of the work of preparation of the soil, of planting, of protecting, of observing varying conditions of cultivation, in a word, of winning success, the pleasure of vacation is enhanced by frequent visits at least weekly, to the school garden, and giving the attention needed and recording observations. These records are to be submitted to the teacher at the beginning of the term in August and together with the plot's condition, made the basis of a merit mark in Nature Study. This should be made a feature of school standing equal to that assigned to any other school subject. If 100 is a full mark for Language, then 100 should be the full mark for Nature and Agriculture and at least one-half of this should be set for the practical work. If any other system of estimating values is used, then this same principle should govern.

The more the pupil can be encouraged to keep in personal contact during vacation with his school garden plot, the more the people, parents, ratepayers and young people, can be induced to co-operate, the stronger the influence that will be exerted on the youth to magnify community life. People whose community life has been happy, bright and attractive in youth and who have learned the secret of getting intellectual and moral values through their physical and social activities, will never in maturity lose the attachment to that locality or interest in its pursuits.

This is a direct call to teachers and pupils, to school trustees, to ratepayers in school meeting assembled, to unite to make the school a paying investment for the community. The time needed will bring its own reward. Four hours spent out of every two weeks during July and August, as indicated in the foregoing, will pay the best interest in uplifting life in rural communities.

In these days when patriotic attachment to the Empire is being tested, it must be remembered that loyalty to our home community is the best guarantee of the broader national feeling. Moreover to actively cultivate local loyalty will be found the best way to inoculate in the youth of our land that deep devotion to the principles of government and freedom for which the British Empire stands pre-eminent. Through the love we bear our homes and district and the efforts we make to enhance and dignify their importance we establish and fortify ourselves as patriotic citizens. By doing, we create appreciation and compel recognition.

Help yourselves, improve your homes, enrich true living by uniting to strengthen and benefit the school of your community.



